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Lambda Letters Project

32574

Vol. 3, No. 10 October, 1995 6212 Silverton Way, Carmichael, California 95608 Phone (916) 965-6851

Legislative Results After a Year of Turmoil

Most sources are describing this as one of the least productive years in recent memory for the California Legislature. This resulted from distractions caused by the power struggles going on, primarily in the State Assembly. Many legislators were paying more attention to gaining power for their side than to legislating. Nevertheless, many bills were acted upon. The following is a summary of actions on a number of bills of interest to our community.

Note: A two-year bill is one that did not make it out of the Legislature before the end of the legislative session in mid-September but permission has been granted to reconsider the bill in January, 1996.

Women's Issues

AB 168 (Alpert–D): To Governor for signature. Allows those who commit domestic violence to avoid jail time or fine by pleading guilty, agreeing to enter counseling and avoiding further domestic violence. Sentence is imposed immediately if they violate these terms.

AB 231 (Kuehl–D): To Governor for signature. Allows the Governor to commute the sentence of

Continued on page 6

Entertainment Book Sales Are Slow

This year's budget calls for us to net $1,162 in profits from the sale of Entertainment Books. Those profits are needed to pay for the important work of the Lambda Letters Project. We get an average of $8 profit form each book sold. So, we must sell a lot of books to reach our net profit goal. Last year we sold a little under 300 Entertainment Books. However, so far this year, we have sold only about 30 books. We need to do better.

The books really are a great value. They contain over 900 discount coupons from restaurants, theaters, hotels, airlines, etc. For example, the coupons provide a free meal for a second person when two go to dinner together. However, the savings are not just available to couples. Many coupons provide 50%-off values when used by just one person. You can recover the cost of the book in just two to four weeks. From then on, any savings are *pure profit for you.* If you bought last year's book the coupons in it will expire at the end of this month, but the coupons in this year's book are good immediately.

Help fund the important work of the Lambda Letters Project. Please use the enclosed order form and order your Entertainment Book today. And encourage all your friends to buy a book from us also.

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Lambda Letters Progress Report

Letters Collected

August, 1995	2,780 letters
In all of 1995	22,618 letters

Dollars Spent

August, 1995	$ 1,889
In all of 1995	$10,627

Can You Help?

Please support the very important work of the Lambda Letters Project with your contributions.

The Lambda Letters Newsletter is published monthly except in December by the Lambda Letters Project Inc., 6212 Silverton Way, Carmichael, CA 95608. Postmaster: send address changes to the address above.

Lambda Letters Project

Statement of Purpose

To promote people of color, feminist, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and HIV/AIDS status advocacy and to bring people of color, women, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and persons affected by or living with HIV/AIDS into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all the privileges and responsibilities thereof.

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(*Actual cost to LLP for you to receive 44 letters in one year.)

Medicaid in Trouble in Congress

Many of you have heard that the Medicare program is "going broke" and must be changed if it is to survive. Medicare funds a significant amount of medical care for persons age 63 and over. Unfortunately, there has been much less in the media concerning Medicaid, which is a parallel type of federally funded program for the poor and disabled. As such, Medicaid funds the essential medical care for 40 percent of all adults in the U.S. living with AIDS and more than 90 percent of our country's HIV-positive children. Medicaid is under just as much attack as Medicare from Congressional cost-cutters, but its constituents are far from being an organized, articulate lobby, as are our country's senior citizens.

The main proposed changes for Medicaid are block-granting and possibly the lifting of federal standards for care and eligibility. Under current Congressional proposals, block grants—which give a fixed amount of dollars to the states—would not only result in them receiving less money but shift the burden of providing care to them as well. Funding shortfalls will translate into fewer people qualifying for Medicaid and fewer benefits for those who do qualify. These dramatic changes in Medicaid funding will undermine the AIDS care infrastructure, which is currently supplemented by Ryan White Care Act Funds, state monies, and community-based AIDS service organizations. In addition, if states are allowed to set their own standards for care and eligibility you can be assured that in many parts of the country people with AIDS will be the losers. Part of this is because Medicaid block grants will set aside specific amounts for women and children, disabled people, and long-term care, which means that shifts to areas of greater need according to geography and demographics will difficult to accomplish.

In Sacramento County (916) 564-8701

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Volunteer Legislative Analyst Still Needed!

For several months we have been advertising, without success, our need for a volunteer legislative analyst to cover People of Color issues. At present our people of color articles and sample letters are being prepared by Lambda Letters' Administrator Boyce Hinman. The problem is that Boyce has many, many duties. In addition to performing many of the day-to-day functions of the Project, he supervises a team of over 60 volunteers.

In the ideal situation other volunteers would handle day-to-day operations of the Project, leaving the Administrator free to provide overall direction and guide the growth of the organization into an ever-larger and more effective effort. In the real world, the Administrator will probably never be free of all daily tasks. However, finding someone to manage our People of Color issues would be an immense step in the right direction. Please consider volunteering for this position or help us find someone who will.

The person selected would compose our People of Color sample letter and the article explaining that letter each month. He or she would also contact various groups to seek their advice on what subjects need to be covered by our letters. Lambda Letters can provide a list of such groups. The volunteer would be asked to attend monthly staff meetings in Sacramento (1–2 hours) and quarterly board meetings, also in Sacramento. Time spent on the job averages 4–5 hours per month.

Prior experience is not necessary, but the person selected must have good written communications skills. This is an important opportunity to influence the issues covered by Lambda Letters each month and affect the way that legislators respond to the needs of the People of Color community.

Please contact us today and let us know that you will help us in this important way. Include a note with your letters or call us at (916) 965-6851. A duty statement is available upon request.

Lesbigay Adoptions Challenged in D.C.

The District of Columbia subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee is currently considering either to limit or restrict legal adoptions by gay, lesbian, or bisexual couples in the District of Columbia. Although current law permits adoptions by such couples, the provision to change this has been added to the D.C. appropriations bill. A number of gay activist groups are opposing this provision, and there has been some discussion about "substitute or compromise" language for the bill that would still permit adoptions by single gays, lesbians, or bisexuals—just not couples. We believe that the current law should not be changed, and that both the proposed provision and the "substitute or compromise" language is not acceptable.

We are asking you this month to write to your representative and urge him or her to oppose any efforts to pass the provision into law. Denying gay, lesbian, and bisexual couples the right to adopt a child is discriminatory and violates the due process provided to all American citizens by the Constitution. The "substitute or compromise" language is even more discriminatory.

Despite all the right-wing, conservative rhetoric and the "arguments" they use to oppose such adoptions, none of their arguments are valid. There is no evidence to suggest that a child is harmed by being raised is a gay, lesbian, or bisexual household. In fact, numerous studies have shown that children growing up in such families end up being just as "well adjusted" as children raised in heterosexual families.

Justice Barbara Keenan, a justice on the Virginia Supreme Court, in her dissent to the Sharon Bottoms adoption case in Virginia, wrote, "adverse effects of a parent's homosexuality cannot be assumed without specific proof." In June, a Canadian court judge, David Nevins, approved adoptions by four lesbian couples in Ontario, saying that the law that prohibited such adoptions was discriminatory and "could not be justified in a free and democratic society." There is just no proof that a nonheterosexual couple cannot provide the same care, love, and nurturing that a child needs. As long as the adopting couple can provide proof of financial, moral, and social responsibility for raising a child, the sexuality of that couple should not be the deciding factor in granting or denying the adoption.

Because there are so many children seeking adoption, and that adoptive parents for these children are often lacking, it is appalling that caring gay, lesbian, and bisexual couples are denied the right to adopt. Even if some people in our community do not choose to model their lives along heterosexual lines (i.e., getting married and "having" children), they should still allow members of the community who *want* to provide loving, caring homes for children the right to adopt them.

The suggestion by the Virginia Supreme Court in the Sharon Bottoms adoption case that a lesbian who wants to adopt a child must first shed herself of her lesbian partner in order to qualify for adoption approval is absurd. That decision is hardly in the interest of promoting family integrity—a supposed tenet of those who espouse "family values"! If prospective parents can show a court of law that they are loving, responsible, and are able to provide financially for their child's welfare, it should not matter whether the couple is married or unmarried, or whether they are heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual.

Ryan White Care Act Passes the House

On September 18, reauthorization for the all-important Ryan White Care Act passed the House of Representatives, although not without some unwanted provisions in it. The bill will now go to a House–Senate Conference Committee to reconcile the differences between the House and Senate versions, at which time we hope members will vote to remove the unwanted provisions. If Lambda Letters received your September letter too late to forward it to your representative, we will send it to a selected Conference Committee member instead, along with an appropriate cover letter. In this way your views will still be heard at an appropriate time.

Please Write to the Attorney General About Gun Control

What does the subject of gun control have to do with an issue affecting people of color? The sad fact is that death by gunshot is particularly common among people of color, especially among young black males. Gun control is needed to help stem the carnage.

The U.S. Government's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) keep statistics on the subject. Their most recent report covers deaths from firearms during 1992. According to that report, the death rate from gun violence for all races and both sexes during that year was 7 deaths per 100,000 people, while the death rate for black males was 29.2 per 100,000. More alarming, the death rate by firearms for black males between the ages of 15 and 24 reached an appalling 141.6 deaths per 100,000. That's over 20 times the death rate for the general population. The CDC also reports that for Hispanic people death from firearms among all ages and both sexes in the U.S. is roughly twice that for white non-Hispanics. The firearms death rate for Native Americans is roughly one and one half times the rate for whites. Only among Asian and Pacific Islanders is the death rate from firearms actually less than that among whites.

Last year California Attorney General Dan Lundgren established the Policy Council on Violence Prevention to look into the increasing tide of violence in our nation. In a recent report the council noted the following facts:

- California is one of the first states in which gunshot wounds have become the leading cause of injury deaths, even surpassing death by auto accident.
- The homicide victimization rate for American males aged 15–24 years of age is eight times higher than in the next highest country, Italy.
- In 1993 California's homicide rate was 12.9 per 100,000 and, according to the 1993 Federal Uniform Crime Report, California ranked third in violent crimes among the states.

Clearly, we have a problem! One of the primary recommendations of the Attorney General's council is to support laws that ban so-called "Saturday night specials," essentially, homemade guns. There were several gun-control laws before the state legislature this year but the Attorney General either opposed or was neutral on every one of them. We need to write to the Attorney General and urge him to support laws that prohibit Saturday night specials. You may use the enclosed sample letter or, preferably, compose your own letter.

Study Backs Needle Exchanges

A joint panel of the National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine recently issued a report on a study that they did of clean needle exchange programs. Those two organization are part of the National Academy of Sciences, a private, nonprofit entity. The report concluded that:

- Such programs do slow the spread of AIDS/HIV infection
- There is no evidence that such programs encourage current users to take more drugs or nonusers to start taking illegal intravenous drugs
- Federal funds should be made available to support clean needle exchange programs

Since 1988 Congress has passed a series of laws prohibiting or restricting the use of federal funds to support needle exchange programs. The ban is to remain in effect unless the U.S. Surgeon General determines that such programs are effective and do not promote illegal drug use. However, the post of Surgeon General is now vacant. Even if the position is filled, given its recent history, the Surgeon General is unlikely to take such a controversial step.

Continued from page 1

someone convicted of a felony when that person has been subject to domestic violence and that experience contributed to the crime.

AB 720 (Speier–D): In Senate Appropriations Committee (a two-year bill). Makes it a crime to commit domestic violence in a dating relationship. Requires courts to issue restraining orders in cases of domestic violence. Currently the courts are only required to consider issuing orders. Strengthens penalties for repeat offenders.

AB 1100 (Speier–D): To Governor for signature. Prohibits businesses from charging different prices to men and women for the same or essentially similar services.

SB 132 (Watson–D): To Governor for signature. Requires police to take domestic violence and related substance abuse training every two years in hopes they will handle cases of domestic violence with more sensitivity.

SB 187 (Hayden–D): To Governor for signature. Eliminates the need for an abused spouse to pay a court fee before a court will issue a permanent protective or restraining order.

SB 924 (Petris–D): To Governor for signature. Extends statute of limitations on domestic violence from one year to five years. Gives more time to prosecute someone for domestic violence.

Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Issues

AB 627 (Katz–D): Died in Assembly Judiciary Committee. Would have provided for statewide domestic partner registration.

AB 1001 (Kuehl–D): In Assembly Higher Education Committee (a two-year bill). Would promote safe school environment for students regardless of their sexual orientation.

AB 1209 (Knox–D): In Assembly Public Employees Committee (a two-year bill). Would allow state and local governments to provide domestic partner benefits to their employees.

SB 806 (Monteith–R): In Senate Judiciary Committee (a two-year bill). Expands the exemption to the Unruh Civil Rights Act. Would allow the Boy Scouts to discriminate against gays. May be held without action until the California Supreme Court rules in two cases that raise the same issue.

SB 911 (Marks–D): To Governor for signature. Allows Governor to offer rewards for information leading to the arrest and conviction of someone for hate crimes.

AIDS/HIV Issues

AB 590 (Knox–D): To Governor for signature. Would allow MediCal to pay for bottled water and water filters when local authorities have declared that tap water has become polluted.

AB 1408 (Villaraigosa–D): To Governor for signature. Allows courts, upon recommendation of the Director of the California Department of Corrections, to recall the sentence of a terminally ill prisoner who is no threat to himself or the community. It would allow such persons to die with dignity in their homes.

AB 1529 (Vasconcellos–D): To Governor for signature. Allows for the medical use of marijuana in cigarettes under certain circumstances. The Governor vetoed similar bills twice before.

AB 1976 (Burton–D): To Governor for signature. Provides an exemption in state licensing requirements that would make it easier for group homes to provide limited housing services (without medical care or supervision) to people with HIV/AIDS.

SB 248 (Hayden–D): Signed by Governor. Yeah! Provides minimum utility rates for people with HIV/AIDS.

SB 472 (Petris–D): To Governor for signature. Improves training for medical service providers who care for people with neurological degenerative disorders.

SB 889 (Leslie–R): To Governor for signature. Requires doctors to provides HIV counseling to patients seeking pregnancy services. Requires doctors to offer HIV testing to such patients. Originally the bill required testing of all 600,000 children born in California and prohibited blind testing of children. ("Blind" testing is anonymous testing.) These two objectionable features were dropped from the final bill.

People of Color Issues

AB 161 (Napolitano–D): On the Assembly floor (a two-year bill). Current law prohibits manufacturing, selling, or offering to sell an ID, such as a driver's license or passport. This law adds that these

Continued on page 8

Women's Issue

Welfare Reform or the Reformation of Women?

Earlier this year we focused on an effort to kill H.R. 4, the welfare reform bill included in the Contract with America. Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, H.R. 4 passed the House of Representatives and was amended and passed in the Senate on September 19th. It's now back in the House where the Senate amendments are being heard. We expect this bill—now being referred to as Senate Amendment No. 2280—to end up in the Conference Committee in October and back to the House for a floor vote. This month's letter is directed to our representatives to remind them of our concerns while they are renegotiating the terms of this bill. The original House bill was quite severe and would have taken much from poor women and their children. The amended Senate version is more moderate and although it still proposes to cut many services, it is an improvement over the original House version.

Since there are still other welfare-related bills being heard, we formatted this month's letter to cover all bases. We listed our concerns as a set of guiding principles that reflect some of the specific provisions which the Senate version amended.

The basic message is this: women who have children need a safety net when all other forms of support are gone. This safety net should be temporary, and the role of government should be to provide *adequate* support and assistance to mothers trying to reenter the workforce. These measures should not be punitive in nature, nor should they attempt to direct the moral behavior of women—for that would be oppressive and sexist. It should never be the job of government to control the reproductive behavior of women. Instead, welfare should be a program of opportunities and incentives, with any punitive measures directed at the absent, nonsupporting father.

Please sign this month's letter urging your representative to preserve at least some of these humane and basic services. In order for welfare reform to be a success, it must be supportive and enriching—not oppressive and punishing.

AIDS Drug Lottery Expanded

According to newspaper reports, more AIDS patients will have a chance to get an experimental new AIDS drug free through a nationwide lottery.

Hoffman-LaRoche in June announced a lottery to pick 2,280 advanced AIDS patients to get Invirase, the first of an experimental new class of AIDS drugs called protease inhibitors. Demand for the medicine was so high that in mid-September Roche announced it will provide Invirase to an additional 2,000 patients picked through a second lottery in early November.

Patients not selected in the first lottery will automatically be reentered in the new one. Beginning October 2nd, patients can get information on the lottery by calling (800) 332-2144. They must return registration forms by November 3rd. Those selected will get the drug in mid-November

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Legislative Update
Continued from page 6

IDs cannot be given away or imported into California. It also adds death or marriage certificates to the list of IDs.

AB 1150 (Morrissey–R): To the Governor for signature. Would authorize the Insurance Commissioner to develop non-English language informational sheets regarding the terms used in insurance policies.

SB 82 (Kopp–Ind.): To Governor for signature. Would prohibit school board members from making statements or publishing materials urging voters to approve or disapprove any school measure on the ballot.

SB 443 (Solis–D): To Governor for signature. Increases the penalty for employers who fail to pay or underpay employee's wages.

SB 911 (Marks–D): To Governor for signature. See Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual section, above.

SB 982 (Solis–D): To Governor for signature. Requires that interpreters be present in court hearings on domestic violence when one or both of the parties don't understand English.

SB 1094 (Kopp–Ind.): On Senate floor for approval of changes made in Assembly (a two-year bill). Would require county elections officials to cancel the registration of a voter who fails to vote in two successive federal elections.

Congressmembers React to Hate Mongering

In early September President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, in southern Africa, made a number of hateful statements about lesbians, gays, and bisexuals. He compared them to animals and he invited his people to abuse them and to turn them in to the police.

Seventy members of Congress were upset enough about this to sign a letter of complaint and send it to the President of Zimbabwe. The letter states that the signers believe President Mugabe was gravely mistaken in his denunciation of people based on their sexual orientation and in his assertion that lesbians, gays, and bisexuals should be excluded from protection of their individual freedom and human rights.

The letter was signed by many members of the California delegation to the U.S. House of Representatives—all Democrats: Xavier Becerra, Howard Berman, George Brown, Ronald Dellums, Julian Dixon, Anna Eshoo, Sam Farr, Jane Harman, Tom Lantos, Norman Mineta, Nancy Pelosi, Lucille Roybal-Allard, Maxine Waters, Henry Waxman, and Lynn Woolsey.

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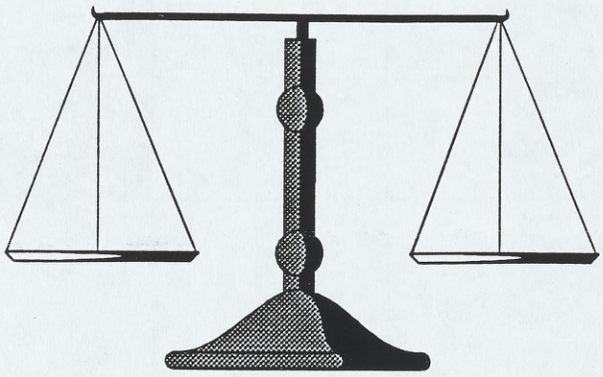

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Sample Page October 1996 Sample Page

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 11 gay couples gather in Copenhagen for marriage - 1989	*2* Rock Hudson dies of AIDS - 1985	*3* Dr. Howard Brown, former NY City Health Commissioner comes out in NY Times interview - 1973	*4*	*5* Dennis Barrie is acquitted on obsenity charges - 1990
6 AIDS memorial quilt unfolded in D.C. - 1989 First Meeting of the Metropolitan Community Church - 1968	*7*	*8* Protest against Marcus Welby episode results in the withdrawal of sponsors and local affiliates - 1974	*9*	*10*	*11* Second March on Washington - 1987	*12*
13 1st British Gay org. founded - 1970 600 arrested on the steps of the Supreme Court - 1987	*14* Some 50,000 to 100,000 attend first Lesbian & Gay March on Washington - 1979	*15* Don't forget to sign and return your letters to Lambda Letters First Meeting of ONE - 1952	*16*	*17*	*18*	*19*
20	*21* Murderer Dan White commits suicide - 1985	*22*	*23*	*24*	*25* Leonard Bernstein's Birthday - 1918	*26*
27 Congress drops federal policy that bans lesbian and gay foreigners - 1990	*28*	*29*	*30* Pope John Paul II issues letter calling gay people "intrinsically disordered" - 1986	*31*		

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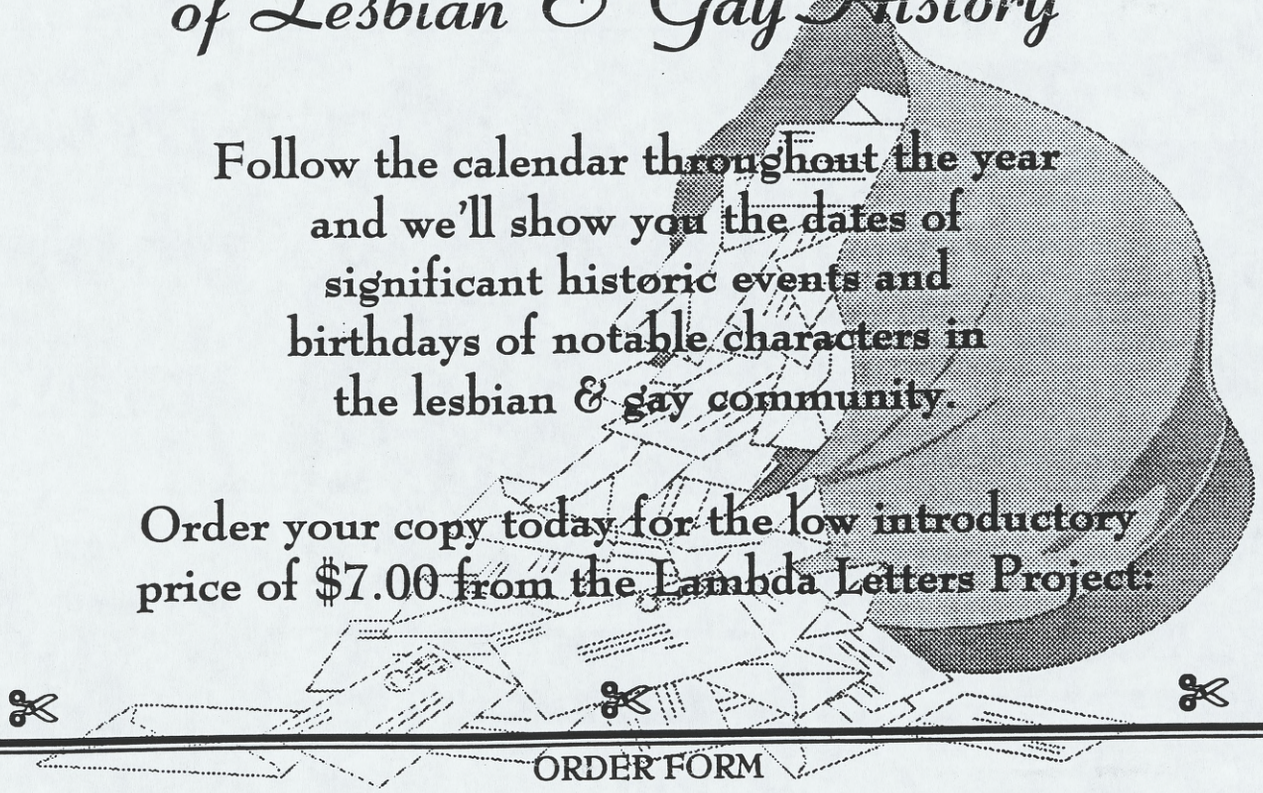

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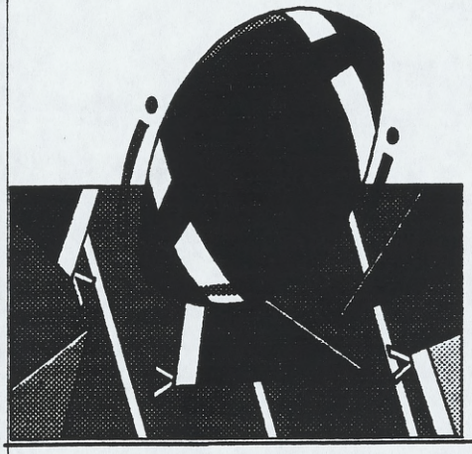
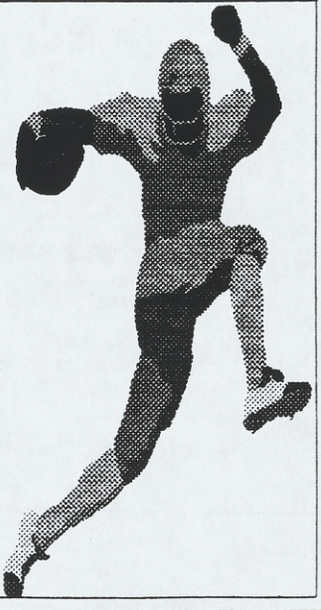


HAPPY HOUR

3PM-8PM

NIGHTLY

HOT Autumn Nights



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FACES

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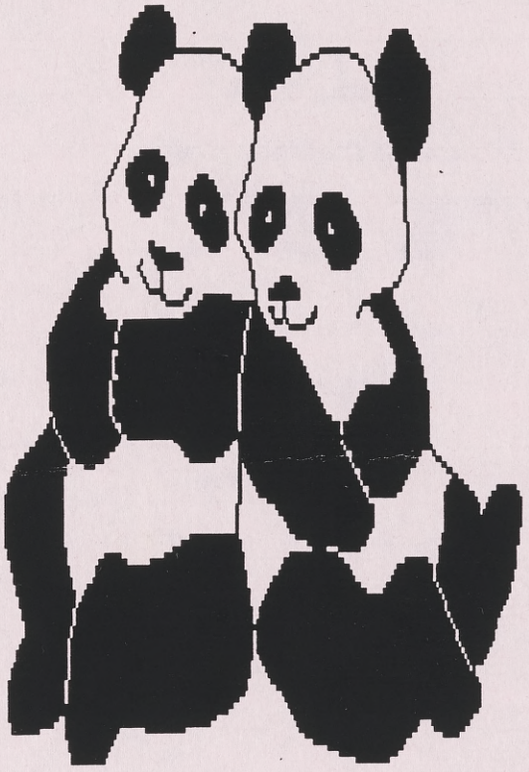

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Sacramento/Gold Country	$40.00		
NORTHERN CALIFORNIA	**Price**	**Quantity**	**Total $**
East Bay/Alameda County	$40.00		
East Bay/Contra Costa County	$40.00		
Fresno/Visalia	$35.00		
Lake Tahoe/Reno Area	$30.00		
Marin/North Bay	$25.00		
San Francisco/San Mateo Counties	$40.00		
San Jose Area/Santa Clara County	$40.00		
Monterey Peninsula/Santa Cruz Co.	$30.00		
Solano/Napa Counties	$25.00		
Sonoma/Napa/Wine Country	$25.00		
Stockton/Modesto	$35.00		
Bakersfield	$30.00		
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA	**Price**	**Quantity**	**Total $**
Inland Empire/Desert Communities	$30.00		
Orange County/Central North	$43.00		
Orange County/Central South	$43.00		
Palm Springs Area	$25.00		
San Diego County	$40.00		
San Fernando/Santa Clarita Valleys	$40.00		
San Gabriel/Pomona Valleys & Glendale	$40.00		
Long Beach/North Orange County	$40.00		
Ventura/Santa Barbara Counties	$30.00		
Greater Los Angeles/SouthBay	$40.00		

Total Order - (check or money order enclosed)	$